

Laws of Cricket

The game is played in accordance with 42 laws of cricket, which have been developed by the Marylebone Cricket Club in discussion with the main cricketing nations. Teams may agree to alter some of the rules for particular games. Other rules supplement the main laws and change them to deal with different circumstances. In particular, there are a number of modifications to the playing structure and fielding position rules that apply to one innings games that are restricted to a set number of fair deliveries

Players and officials

Players

A team consists of eleven players. Depending on his primary skills, a player may be classified as a specialist batsman or bowler. A balanced team usually has five or six specialist batsmen and four or five specialist bowlers. Teams nearly always include a specialist wicket-keeper because of the importance of this fielding position. A player who excels in both batting and bowling is known as an all-rounder. One who excels as a batsman and wicket-keeper is known as a wicket-keeper/batsman, sometimes regarded as a type of all-rounder. True all-rounders are rare and valued

Umpires

Two on-field umpires preside over a match. One umpire will stand behind the wicket at the end from which the ball is bowled, and adjudicate on most decisions. The other will stand near the fielding position called square leg, which offers a side view of the batsman, and assist on decisions for which he has a better view. In some professional matches, they may refer a decision to an off-field 'third' umpire, who has the assistance of television replays. In international matches an off-field match referee ensures that play is within the laws of cricket and the spirit of the game.

Scorers

Two scorers are appointed, and most often one scorer is provided by each team. The laws of cricket specify that the official scorers are to record all runs scored, wickets taken and (where appropriate) overs bowled. They are to acknowledge signals from the umpire, and to check the accuracy of

the score regularly both with each other and, at playing intervals, with the umpires. In practice scorers also keep track of other matters, such as bowlers' analyses, the rate at which the teams bowl their overs, and team statistics such as averages and records. In international and national cricket competitions the media often require notification of records and statistics, so unofficial scorers often keep tally for the broadcast commentators and newspaper journalists. The official scorers occasionally make mistakes, but unlike umpires' mistakes these can be corrected after the event.

The playing field

The cricket field consists of a large circular or oval-shaped grassy ground. There are no fixed dimensions for the field but its diameter usually varies between 450 feet (137 m) to 500 feet (150 m). On most grounds, a rope demarcates the perimeter of the field and is known as the boundary.

The pitch

Most of the action takes place in the centre of this ground, on a rectangular clay strip usually with short grass called the pitch. The pitch measures 106 feet (32.01 m). At each end of the pitch three upright wooden stakes, called the stumps, are hammered into the ground. Two wooden crosspieces, known as the bails, sit in grooves atop the stumps, linking each to its neighbour. Each set of three stumps and two bails is collectively known as a wicket. One end of the pitch is designated the batting end where the batsman stands and the other is designated the bowling end where the bowler runs in to bowl. The area of the field on the side of the line joining the wickets where the batsman holds his bat (the right-hand side for a right-handed batsman, the left for a left-hander) is known as the off side, the other as the leg side or on side. Lines drawn or painted on the pitch are known as creases. Creases are used to adjudicate the dismissals of batsmen and to determine whether a delivery is fair.

Parts of the field

For a one-innings match played over a set number of fair deliveries, there are two additional field markings. A painted oval is made by drawing a semicircle of 30 yards (27.4 m) radius from the centre of each wicket with respect to the breadth of the pitch and joining them with lines parallel, 30 yards (27.4 m) to the length of the pitch. This line, commonly known as the circle, divides the field into an infield and outfield. Two circles of radius 15 yards (13.7 m), centred on each wicket and often marked by dots, define the close-infield. The infield, outfield, and the close-infield are used to enforce fielding restrictions.

Placements of players

The team batting always has two batsmen on the field. One batsman, known as the striker, faces and plays the balls bowled by the bowler. His partner stands at the bowling end and is known as the non-striker. The fielding team has all eleven of its players on the ground, and at any particular time, one of these will be the bowler. The player designated as bowler must change after every over. The wicket-keeper, who generally acts in that role for the whole match, stands or crouches behind the wicket at the batting end. The captain of the fielding team spreads his remaining nine players the fielders around the ground to cover most of the area. Their placement may vary dramatically depending on strategy. Each position on the field has a unique label.

Match structure

The toss

On the day of the match, the captains inspect the pitch to determine the type of bowlers whose bowling would be suited for the offered pitch surface and select their eleven players. The two opposing captains then toss a coin. The captain winning the toss may choose either to bat or bowl first.

Overs

Each innings is divided into overs, each consisting of six consecutive legal (see "Extras" for details) deliveries bowled by the same bowler. After completing an over, the bowler must take up a fielding position and let another player take over the bowling. After every over, the batting and bowling ends are swapped, and the field positions are adjusted. The umpires swap so the umpire at the bowler's end moves to square leg, and the umpire at square leg moves to the new bowler's end.

End of an innings

An innings is completed if: Ten out of eleven batsmen are 'out' (dismissed). A team chasing a given target number of runs to win manages to do so. The predetermined number of overs are bowled (in a one-day match only, usually 50 overs). A captain declares his team's innings closed (this does not apply to one-day limited over matches).

Playing time

Typically, two innings matches are played over three to five days with at least six hours of cricket being played each day. One innings matches are usually played over one day for six hours or more. There are formal intervals on each day for lunch and tea, and shorter breaks for drinks, where necessary. There is also a short interval between innings. The game is only played in dry weather. Additionally, as in professional cricket it is common for balls to be bowled at over 90 mph (144 km/h), the game needs to be played in daylight that is good enough for a batsman to be able to see the ball. Play is therefore halted during rain (but not usually drizzle) and when there is bad light. Some one-day games are now played under floodlights, but, apart from a few experimental games in Australia, floodlights are not used in longer games. Professional cricket is usually played outdoors. These requirements mean that in England, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Zimbabwe the game is usually played in the summer. In the West Indies, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh games are played in the winter. In these countries the hurricane and cyclone season coincides with their summers.

Batting and scoring runs

Batting

Batsmen strike the ball from the batting crease, with the flat surface of a wooden bat. If the batsman hits the ball with his bat, it is called a shot (or stroke). If the ball brushes the side of the bat it is called an edge or nick. Shots are named according to the style of swing and the direction aimed. As part of the team's strategy, he may bat defensively, blocking the ball downwards, or aggressively, hitting the ball hard to empty spaces in order to score runs. There is no requirement to run if the ball is struck. Batsmen come in to bat in a batting order, decided by the team captain. The first two positions, the "openers", face the most hostile bowling, from fast bowlers at their freshest and with a new ball. After that, the team typically bats in descending order of batting skill, the first five or six batsmen usually being the best in the team. Then follow the all-rounders - bowlers or wicket-keepers who can bat decently - and finally the pure bowlers who rarely score well. This order may be changed at any time during the course of the game for strategic reasons.

Run scoring

To score a run, a striker must hit the ball and run to the opposite end of the pitch, while his non-striking partner runs to his end. Both runners must touch the ground behind the popping crease with either his bat or his body to register a run. If the striker hits the ball well enough, the batsmen may double back to score two or more runs. This is known as running between wickets. However, no rule exists whereby the batsman has to run upon striking the ball. If the batsmen score an odd number of runs, then they will have swapped ends and their roles as striker and non-striker will be reversed for the next ball, unless the most recent ball marks the end of an over. If a fielder knocks the bails off the stumps with the ball while no batsman is grounded behind the nearest popping crease, the nearest batsman is run out. If the ball goes over the boundary, then four runs are scored, or six if the ball has not bounced.

Extras

Every run scored by the batsmen contributes to the team's total. A team's total also includes a number of runs which are unaccredited to any batsmen. These runs are known as extras, apart from in Australia where they are also called sundries. Extras consist of byes, leg byes, no balls, wides and penalty runs. The former two are runs that can be scored if the batsman misses making contact with bat and ball, and the latter two are types of fouls committed by the bowler. For serious infractions such as tampering with the ball, deliberate time-wasting, and damaging the pitch, the umpires may award penalty extras to the opposition; in each case five runs. Five penalty runs are also awarded if a fielder uses anything other than his body to field the ball, or if the ball hits a protective helmet left on the field by the fielding team. A team need not be batting in order to receive penalty extras.

Bowling and dismissals

Bowling

A bowler delivers the ball toward the batsmen, using what is known as a bowling action: the elbow may be held at any angle and may bend further, but may not straighten out during the action. If the elbow straightens, it is an illegal throw and the delivery is called a no-ball. Under new cricketing law, after consultation with health experts, the bowler is allowed to straighten his arm 15 degrees or less, if the bowler straightens his or her arm more than 15 degrees it is called a "no ball". This new law came in to prevent injury to bowlers. Usually, the bowler pitches the ball so that it bounces before reaching the batsman. Some part of the bowler's front foot in the delivery stride (that is, the stride

when the ball is released) must be behind the popping crease to avoid a no-ball (although the bowler's front foot does not have to be grounded). The ball must also be delivered so it is within the batsman's reach; otherwise it is termed a wide. A wide cannot be called if the batsman hits the ball. A wide or no-ball results in an extra run being added to the batting team's score, and an extra ball being bowled in the over. The bowler's primary goal is to take wickets; that is, to get a batsman out or dismissed. If a bowler can dismiss the more accomplished batsmen on the opposing team he reduces the opportunity for them to score, as it exposes the less skilful batsmen. Their next task is to limit the numbers of runs scored per over they bowl. This is known as the Economy rate. If a bowler gets a batsman out, he is credited for this achievement. There are two main kinds of bowlers: pace bowlers and spin bowlers.

Dismissal of a batsman

A batsman is allowed to bat as long as he does not get out (also known as being dismissed). There are ten ways of being dismissed, some of which are credited as wickets to the bowler, some of which are not credited to any player. If the batsman is dismissed, another player from the batting team replaces him until ten batsmen are out and the innings is over. Many modes of dismissal require the wicket to be "put down". The wicket is put down if a bail is dislodged from the top of the stumps or a stump is struck out of the ground either by the ball, or by a fielder using his hand which is holding the ball. Of the following ten modes of dismissal, the first six are common, while the last four are technicalities which rarely occur. Briefly, the ten modes are:

- **Caught** : When a fielder catches the ball before the ball bounces and after the batsman has struck it with the bat or it has come into contact with the batsman's glove while it is in contact with the bat handle. The bowler and catcher are both credited.
- **Bowled** : When a delivered ball hits the stumps at the batsman's end, and dislodges one or both of the bails. This happens regardless of whether the batsman has edged the ball onto the stumps or not. The bowler is credited with the dismissal.
- **Leg before wicket (LBW)** : When a delivered ball misses the bat and strikes the batsman's leg or pad, and the umpire judges that the ball would otherwise have struck the stumps. The laws of cricket stipulate certain exceptions in favour of the batsman; for instance, a batsman should not be given out LBW if the place where the ball bounced on the pitch is to the leg-side of the area strictly between the two wickets. The bowler is credited with the dismissal.
- **Run out** : When a fielder, bowler or wicket-keeper removes one or both of the bails with the ball by hitting the stumps whilst a batsman is still running between the two ends. The ball can either hit the stumps directly or the fielder's hand with the ball inside it

can be used to dislodge the bails. Such a dismissal is not officially credited to any player, although the identities of the fielder or fielders involved is often noted in brackets on the scorecard.

- **Stumped** : When the batsman leaves his crease in playing a delivery, voluntarily or involuntarily, but the ball goes to the wicket-keeper who uses it to remove one or both of the bails through hitting the bail(s) or the wicket before the batsman has remade his ground. The bowler and wicket-keeper are both credited. This generally requires the keeper to be standing within arm's length of the wicket, which is done mainly to spin bowling.
- **Hit wicket** : When the batsman accidentally knocks the stumps with either the body or the bat, causing one or both of the bails to be dislodged, either in playing a shot or in taking off for the first run. The bowler is credited with the dismissal.
- **Handled the ball** : When the batsman deliberately handles the ball without the permission of the fielding team. No player is credited with the dismissal.
- **Hit the ball twice** : When the batsman deliberately strikes the ball a second time, except for the sole purpose of guarding his wicket. No player is credited with the dismissal.
- **Obstructing the field** : When a batsman deliberately hinders a fielder from attempting to field the ball. No player is credited with the dismissal.
- **Timed out** : When a new batsman takes more than three minutes to take his position in the field to replace a dismissed batsman. (If the delay is protracted, the umpires may cause the match to be forfeited.) No player is credited with the dismissal

Additionally, a batsman may leave the field without being dismissed. For instance, if he is injured or taken ill, this is known as retired hurt or retired ill. The batsman is not out; he may return to bat later in the same innings if sufficiently recovered. Also, an unimpaired batsman may retire, in which case he is treated as being dismissed retired out; no player is credited with the dismissal. An individual cannot be out 'bowled', 'caught', 'leg before wicket', 'stumped', or 'hit wicket' off a no ball. He cannot be out 'bowled', 'caught', 'leg before wicket', or 'hit the ball twice' off a wide. Some of these modes of dismissal can take place without the bowler bowling a delivery. The batsman who is not on strike may be run out by the bowler if he leaves his crease before the bowler bowls, and a batsman can be out obstructing the field or retired out at any time. Timed out by its nature is a dismissal without a delivery. With all other modes of dismissal, only one batsman can be dismissed per ball bowled. Obstructing the field, Handled the ball, Timed Out and Hit the ball twice dismissals are extremely rare.

Fielding and wicket-keeping

Fielders assist the bowlers to prevent batsmen from scoring too many runs. They do this in two ways: by taking catches to dismiss a batsman, and by intercepting hit balls and returning them to the pitch to attempt run-outs to restrict the scoring of runs. **The wicket-keeper** is a specialist fielder who stands behind the batsman's wicket throughout the game. His primary job is to gather deliveries that the batsman fails to hit, to prevent them running into the outfield, which would enable batsmen to score byes. To this end, he wears special gloves (he is the only fielder allowed to do so) and pads to cover his lower legs. Due to his position directly behind the striker, the wicket-keeper has a good chance of getting a batsman out caught off a fine edge from the bat; thicker edges are typically handled by the "slips" fieldsmen. The wicket-keeper is also the only person who can get a batsman out stumped.

Other roles

Captain

The captain's acumen in deciding the strategy is crucial to the team's success. The captain makes a number of important decisions, including setting field positions, alternating the bowlers and taking the toss. The captain's job on the team is very important but can be rather stressful at times. Much blame is placed on a captain when his team loses. However, it is considered an honour to be in such a privileged position and much praise is given to the captain when his team wins. The burden of the captain's duties can interfere with his quality of play considerably, slightly, or not at all, depending on how well he deals with the stress of his position.

A runner

In the event of a batsman being fit to bat but too injured to run, he may ask the umpire and the fielding captain for a runner. The runner chosen must, if possible, be a player who has already been given out. After a batsman hits the ball, the runner's only task is to run between the wickets in place of the injured batsman.

Substitutes

In all forms of cricket, if a player gets injured or becomes ill during a match, a substitute is allowed to field instead of him; though he cannot bowl, bat, or act as a captain or wicket-keeper. Here the substitute is a temporary role and leaves the field once the injured player is fit to return.

For 9 months from July 2005, the ICC trialed the concept of a Super Sub in one-day international (ODI) cricket and some other limited overs competitions. A single full substitution was allowed, with the replaced player not allowed to return to the game. It was discontinued from March 2006.